

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 204119

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 204119

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SN

SUBJECT: KIDNAPPED MISSIONARIES IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

REF: SINGAPORE 3247

"FOLLOWING IS A REPEAT

QUOTE

0 P 071203Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

1. MUSLIM SEPARATISTS IN EXTREME SOUTH THAILAND KIDNAPPED TWO WOMEN MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF THE OVERSEAS MISSIONARY FELLOWSHIP (OMF) APRIL 23. ONE WAS BRITISH AND THE OTHER A NEW ZEALANDER. TWO ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILIES, "THE NATION" AND THE "BANGKOK POST", REPORTED MAY 7 (REFERENCES) THAT THE "PATTANI LIBERATION FRONT" SENT A LETTER WHICH THE OMF OFFICE IN YALA RECEIVED MAY 5. THE LETTER ESSENTIALLY CALLS FOR THE U.S. AND BRITAIN TO HALT ALL MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO THAILAND AS A PRE-CONDITION FOR THE RELEASE OF THE TWO MISSIONARIES. WHILE NEITHER THE BRITISH EMBASSY NOR WE HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS LETTER, THE BRITISH HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE OMF IN

YALA WHO CONFIRMED THAT THE PRESS ACCOUNTS OF ITS CONTENTS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY ACCURATE. THE ONLY EXCEPTION IS THE
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PAGE 02 STATE 204119

STATEMENT IN REFERENCE A THAT "AS SOON AS THE U.S. AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS 'ACKNOWLEDGE' THEIR DEMANDS, THE

TWO MISSIONARIES WILL BE RELEASED." THE OMF SAYS THAT THIS STIPULATION DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE LETTER.

2. THE AUTHENTICITY OF THIS LETTER IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE. IT DID NOT INCLUDE HAND WRITTEN MESSAGES FROM THE TWO NURSES AS HAD THE PREVIOUS NOTE DEMANDING A RANSOM OF 10 MILLION BAHT (500,000 DOLS).

3. BACKGROUND: FOUR OF THAILAND'S FIVE SOUTHERNMOST PROVINCES (YALA, PATTANI, NARATHIWAT, AND SATUN) HAVE AN APPROXIMATELY 75 PERCENT MALAY MUSLIM POPULATION. EXCEPT FOR SATUN, WHICH IS GEOGRAPHICALLY SOMEWHAT CUT OFF FROM THE OTHER THREE, THE PEOPLE TEND TO SPEAK MALAY RATHER THAN THAI. MANY OF THE MALAY MUSLIMS ARE THUS ETHNICALLY, RELIGIOUSLY, AND LINGUISTICALLY ALIENATED FROM THE COUNTRY'S ETHNIC THAI BUDDHIST MAJORITY.

4. ACTION TAKEN TO DATE: AMBASSADOR KINTNER MAY 7 ASKED AIR CHIEF MARSHAL THAWI CHUNLASAP, THE DEFENSE MINISTER, WHAT POSTURE AMERICANS WHO ARE WORKING IN THE EXTREME SOUTH SHOULD ASSUME THERE. THAWI REPLIED THEY SHOULD LIE LOW. SINCE NEITHER OF THE TWO WOMEN KIDNAPPED IS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN AND SINCE WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED A COPY OF THE LETTER ON U.S. AID, WE ARE MAINTAINING A POSTURE OF NO COMMENT WITH THE PRESS. WE ARE MEANWHILE KEEPING IN DAILY CONTACT WITH THE BRITISH EMBASSY AND ARE ASKING OUR SONGKHLA CONSUL TO KEEP CLOSE TABS ON THE SITUATION. KINTNER UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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